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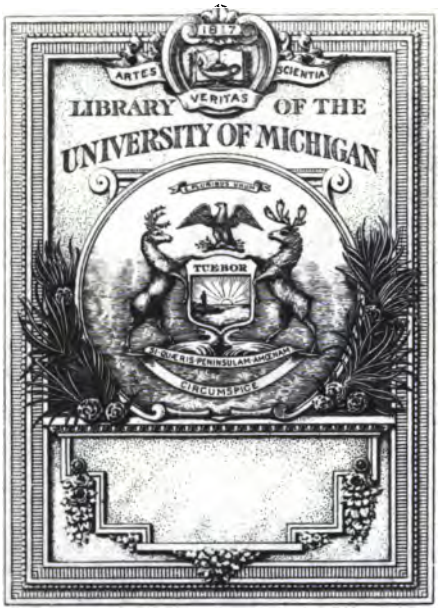

THE GIFT OF
DANIEL L. QUIRK, JR.
CLASS OF 1893

Gaylord
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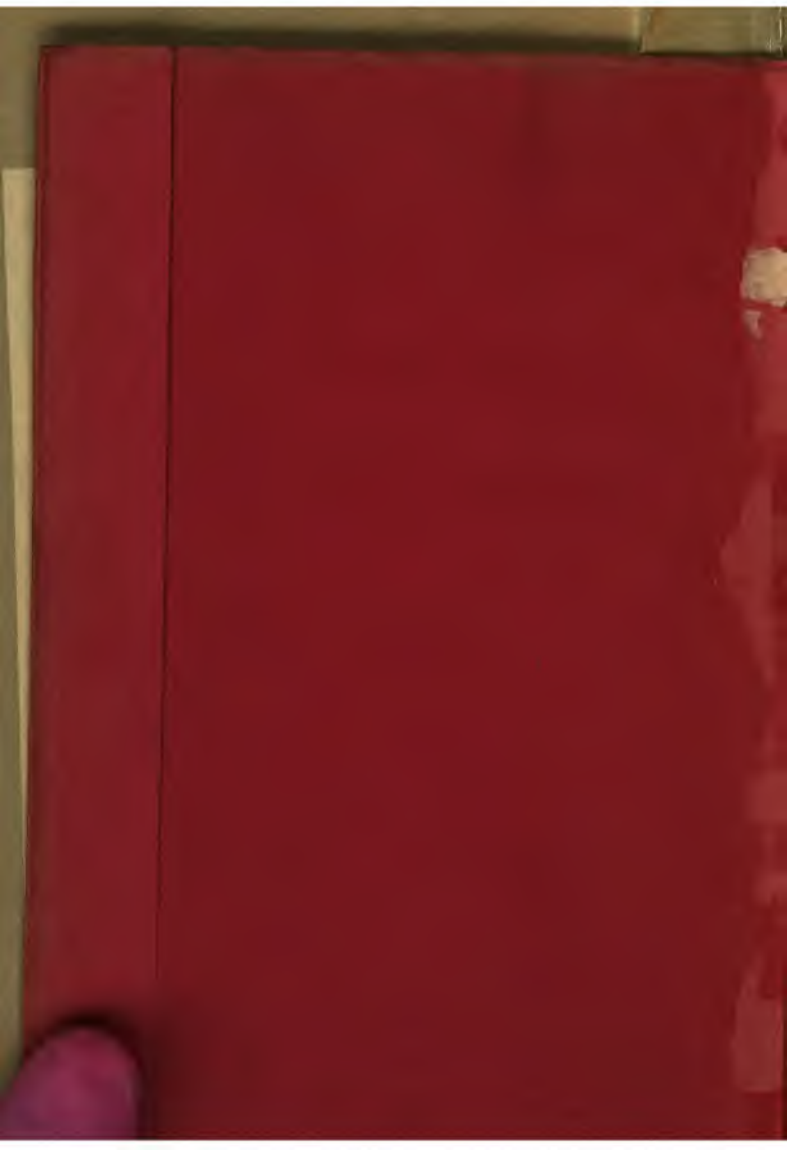
Repertory Plays

Miles Dixon

by

Gilbert Cannan

LeRoy Phillips, *Boston*



Daniel L. Quirk, Jr.

MILES DIXON

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

FOUR PLAYS BY GILBERT CANNAN

JAMES AND JOHN - - - - *one act.*

MILES DIXON - - - - - *two acts.*

MARY'S WEDDING - - - - *one act.*

A SHORT WAY WITH AUTHORS, *one act.*

MILES DIXON

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

BY

GILBERT CANNAN

Boston
LE ROY PHILLIPS
Publisher

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6-26-56

Produced at the GAIETY THEATRE, MANCHESTER,
November, 1910

CHARACTERS

John Baisbrown	-	Mr. HERBERT LOMAS.
Ellen Baisbrown	-	Miss IRENE ROOKE.
Miles Dixon	-	Mr. MILTON ROSMER.
Jan Baisbrown	-	Mr. FRANK DARCH.
Janie Baisbrown	-	Miss HILDA BRUCE POTTER.

CHARACTERS

John Baisbrown.

Ellen Baisbrown.

Miles Dixon.

Jan Baisbrown.

Janie Baisbrown.

ACT I. The Yard of Brimmerhead Farm at night.

ACT II. The Kitchen of Brimmerhead Farm.

Twenty years elapse between the two acts.

MILES DIXON

Act I

The scene is the yard of a farm. A rough wall at the right is broken by a gateway leading into a field, across the brow of which the top of a church tower is seen, and above this is the line of the fells. At the left is a little low house, two storied, with a third room built on to it, approached by a rough outside staircase. It is a wild night and very dark. In the window of the little room a light shines. The window is thrown open and the head of a woman is shown for a moment before the light is extinguished. The window is shut and the key of the door is turned in the lock.

There is silence for some time, and the white walls of the little house loom mistily through the darkness. . . . Presently a man comes through the gateway, floundering in the muck of the yard, and gropes his way up the staircase. He tries the door, and curses when he finds it locked. He knocks and knocks again. Then he comes down, strikes a match to look for pebbles on the ground, and the light is for that moment shown on his face. It is a dark,

striking face, with the eyes too close together, the lips a little too thin, the jaw a little too long and narrow, and the nose not quite long enough. He gropes about and picks up some pebbles, which he throws at the window of the little house, then waits. He stands muttering and cursing. He throws pebbles again at the window and looks round in the direction of the farmhouse. Over on the other side of the valley a light shines and then is gone. The clock in the church tower strikes one.

MILES

One . . .

[*He throws pebbles again and stands cursing. The window is pushed open and the woman appears.*

ELLEN

Why must you come on this wild night?

MILES

'Tis t' wild night that t' crazy man is craziest and t' thing that calls to 'im calls longest and loudest.

ELLEN

And you'll not be content?

MILES

I'll never be content. . . . To sleep cold and lonely out on t' fells, wet and cold under a wall or wet and cold in a ditch, wi' t' scent o' yer 'air and t' touch o' ye in my mind for

all t' warmth that I 'ave. . . . By God! . . . 'Twas a bad night for me when I furst coom to ye.

ELLEN

And a bad night for me that ever I was false to my man and give myself to a wild tramp the likes o' you. . . .

MILES

Ha' done. . . . I've that to tell you that I cannot stand bawling and crying for t' folk in t' big 'ouse to 'ear.

ELLEN

'Tis late and you'd best be going away. . . . I left t' light for ye 'till I thought ye never was coming. T' beasts are asleep and t' childer are asleep and t' town folks int' house are asleep. . . . Ye'd best be goin' away.

MILES

And where will I sleep?

ELLEN

Where ye've slept these years since the curse came on ye and there was never a 'ouse int' dale would let ye bide in it. . . . Ye'd best be goin', for I must be early stirrin' and there's no knowin' . . .

MILES

And where will I sleep, I say?

ELLEN

Where ye've slept these long years since yer ain kin turned from ye . . . wet and cold, as ye say, under a wall, or wet and cold in a ditch, or crept to a byre for warmth or curled up in t' 'ay in a barn, to steal away in t' dawn like t' wild lone thing that ye are. . . . It were best ye'd drowned yerself in t' beck before ever ye coom creepin' round wi' yer light love words and yer talk o' stars and yer creepin' soft ways that brought me to t' madness that was in me. . . .

MILES

Let me in to ye.

ELLEN

Ye'd best be goin' for t' bad thing that ye are and t' light thing ye've made me be. . . . Ye're t' waste o' t' world, ye are, and I'll never a word from ye. . . .

MILES

I've a mind to go from t' fells. I've a mind to sleep no more on t' fells but to go where there's lights an' warm 'ouses, where there's rich folk and gay folk and folk that 'ave never a care in t' world for t' strong 'ouses they live in and t' soft raiment they wear and t' pretty gems and t' gold things and their pockets full and full o' money, and their cellars all filled wi' bags o' gold. . . . I've a mind to go where there's never a 'ill

and love words is as easy as scything thistles and light as thistledown on t' air. I've a mind to leave ye for t' drab that ye are and go where t' scent o' yer 'air will 'aunt me no more, and I'll clean forget t' touch o' ye, and clean forget t' bad day when I took ye and lost my peace and t' light 'eart that I 'ad. I've a mind to go as other men 'ave gone to make a fortin' and a great name, and not to stay where t' name o' me stinks and is a whispered thing, though there was never a 'armful thing that I did.

ELLEN

An' if ye will not make yer fortin', and if in all t' world yer name stinks and is whispered for an un'oly thing?

MILES

Then I'll go to t' sea and swim out into it 'till I can swim no more . . . and I'll stand wi' t' other dead men at bottom o' t' sea and talk to 'em o' t' rottenness o' women, for 'tis all o' that that dead men talk.

ELLEN

And 'tis o' t' cruelty and savagery and great beastliness o' men that dead women tell, and 'tis you'll be in t' mouths o' all on us for t' worst beast o' them all and for t' black 'ate that ye brought into t' 'earts o' us, that 'ad never a true word on your lips nor a true thought in your 'ead nor a true beat o' t'

'eart for a one of us. . . . An' what was given ye gladly ye spoiled in t' takin'. . . . You to talk o' losin' your peace and t' lightness o' 'eart that ye 'ad! . . . When ye come lightly and ye go lightly and 'tis all to ye like eatin' till ye be full or drinkin' till there's no thirst left in ye . . . and not one o' us is more to ye than another. . . .

MILES

Ye lie an' ye lie an' ye know that ye lie, for there's none but you . . .

ELLEN

'Ere. . . . But ower t' fells there's this and that and t'other one, an' always a new one comin' up t' road and you leapin' down t' fells to meet 'er.

MILES

'Tis another world ower t' fells and me another man that ye take no count on and never will know.

ELLEN

And that's t' badness in ye. . . . Ye'd best be goin'.

MILES

And if I go 'twill be never to come to ye again . . . and me come down fro' t' fells to tell ye that I was goin' out into t' world away fro' t' fells and t' madness in 'em and to say would ye come wi' me to keep t' wind o' t' fells beatin' in my face and to keep t' sights

and scents and sounds wi' me in all t' places where we may come. . . .

ELLEN

For t' likes o' you to leave my man and t' fine 'ouse 'e gives me and t' childer and go out wi' ye, wi' never a stick nor stock between us, and never a 'ouse to live in and wander ower t' cold world. . . . Fine under t' stars on summer nights. . . . Oh, ye'd best be goin'. . . .

MILES

And you that put t' light in yer window for to tell me yer man was gone to t' town, ye're now for tellin' me to be gone?

ELLEN

'Twas to tell ye that that I brought ye' ere wi' t' light i' my window. . . . I've a mind to get back to t' woman that I was and forget that ever you coom slinkin' to destroy t' good life that I 'ad.

MILES

And ye'll not let me go so lightly wi' never a kiss o' yer lips an' never a touch o' yer 'ands.

ELLEN

Ye came lightly and lightly ye can go, and I'll not 'ave a kiss o' yer lips and I'll forget that ever there was such a thing as you. . . .

[Miles has been standing immediately under the window, and they have been up to now

talking in low voices so as not to be heard in the house on the other side of the yard. Miles springs back now and raises his voice.

MILES

Then I'll not go till all t' folk in t' dale know ye for t' woman that ye are, for t' rotten, lying thing that ye are; an' 'tis you, when I'm striding ower t' world, 'll be out there on t' fells, sleepin' wet and cold under a wall or wet and cold in a ditch an' alone . . . an' me stridin' ower t' world. . . . An' ye'll never forget. . . .

ELLEN

Go. [*She shuts the window.*

MILES

Huh! . . . Ye trull. . . . And you, when yer man's in t' town, to set light to draw t' likes o' me to beat like a moth again t' panes o' yer window, and would draw me into t' flames 'till my wings be scorched and me fall broken to t' ground. . . . I'll come to ye. . . .

[*He runs up the stairs and tries the latch, but finds it fast. He shakes the door furiously. His tone changes.*

MILES

'Tis foolishness that I said. . . . D' ye 'ear? 'Tis foolishness an' all that cooms fro' sittin' alone on t' fells wi' t' thoughts in me

windin' about and about, and never a thought but comes back to you and t' wonder o' you. [*He listens.*] For there was never t' like o' you since t' world began, and you t' lovely mate for me, that, for all that my name stinks and is a whispered thing, am a larger man and a freer man and a braver man and a properer man than any that goes sellin' theirselves for t' little livin' they need, an' toilin' and moilin' like slaves for t' small livin' that is all that t' masters 'll give em up yon int' quarry and down yon in t' fields. . . . [*He listens.*] D' ye 'ear? 'Tis foolishness that I said and all that cooms to a man fro' t' great misery o' lovin' a woman that 'e canna take and show to t' world for t' wonderful mate that she is. . . . 'Tis foolishness that I said for t' black jealousy that comes ower me in t' long hours when I sit out yon and think o' you livin' along o' t' fools that 'ave never an eye for t' sights o' t' world and never an ear for t' sounds . . . and so thick and muddy as they are, can keep and 'old ye when ye should be wi' me, lovin' me and t' world so's ye can 'ardly bear it. . . . [*He listens again.*] Ay! Ye 'ear me, ye 'ear me, and fear makes ye as still as a mouse. . . . 'Tis a lonely life I live, but better to live like that, kin and comrade wi' t' stars, and t' fells, and t' runnin' streams, than among men that are slaves an' starved and lonely

each one of 'em for t' fear that is in them. . . . And 'tis t' 'ardness o' thinkin' o' you, so wonderful as you be, livin' wi' t' slaves and t' small things when there's no treasure in t' world that ye might not come by if ye'd come to t' wild 'awks life wi' me. . . . An' you t' most soft and lovely thing in t' world. . . . You're beautiful and live wi' men that 'ave never an eye among 'em to see ye. . . . Grubbin', tunnellin' moles they be. . . . Bat-blind. . . . And there's only me to see t' wonder o' ye. [JOHN BAISBROWN *appears in the gateway, sees* MILES *and stands stock still.*] Open to me . . . I can 'ear ye . . . and you 'ungry for every word that comes fro' my lips. . . . 'Tis known that I canna give ye a fine 'ouse and never a fine dress, but I can take a great 'ill in t' 'ollow o' my 'and and give it you, and I can reach up and pluck a star out o' 'eaven for to shine in yer 'air, and I can give yer a river to sing to ye as never man nor woman can sing o' t' wonder o' t' world . . . and I can give ye sights to see and sounds to 'ear that else 'ld be 'idden from ye all yer days. . . . Let me come to ye. . . . 'Tis dark and never a moon and 'ardly a star, but I can make t' night so light as ever t' crawling men make dark the day. . . .

[*The key turns in the door,* MILES *clicks the latch and thrusts the door open, when* JOHN, *without moving, speaks.*

JOHN

Is it you, Miles Dixon? [MILES *snaps the door to and turns. He stands with never a word, peering through the darkness.*] Is it you, Miles Dixon? and is it so ye come crawlin' in t' dead o' night like a rat for to suck the eggs o' my 'ens?

MILES

Is it you, John Baisbrown?

JOHN

Come down 'ere an' let me set my fingers to yer throat an' choke t' rotten life out o' ye. . . . Or will ye wait while I turn my back and skip an' run away to yer 'ole in t' fells and never let me set eyes on ye more. . . .

MILES

And you, John Baisbrown? . . . Is it you standin' there in t' dark so's I can see only t' great ugly shape of ye?

JOHN

Ay.

MILES

You and me and 'er was schooled together, John Baisbrown, an' d'ye mind 'ow I beat t' bloody nose on ye till ye ran 'owlin'; and d'ye mind 'ow I was ever t' first and ye come lumberin' be'ind?

[BAISBROWN *moves heavily forward.*

JOHN

Will ye come down, ye gowk, or will I knock ye down?

MILES

Ye'll stand there and we'll talk peaceable 'ere in the dark, you standin' there in t' muck an' me wi' my feet at t' height o' yer 'ead.

JOHN

Come down.

MILES

Ye'll stand there and ye'll learn o' t' way o' a man wi' a woman what ye shut yer eyes to an' took for a sinful thing or ye'd never be standin' now, you in t' muck and me wi' my feet at t' height o' yer 'ead . . . and 'er a cowering be'ind t' door fer to 'ear what we say and to 'ear what ye do to me. . . . What will ye do, John Baisbrown?

JOHN

For every word that ye say I'll break a bone in your body, and for t' while that ye keep me standin' 'ere in t' muck an' cold o' t' yard I'll pitch ye to 'ouse wi' t' swine in whose likeness you're made.

MILES

And what will ye do to t' woman?

JOHN

There's you to be broken first, and there's no other thought in me.

MILES

I canna see ye right, but is yer great fingers twitchin' to be at my throat, and is yer breast 'ot in yer, and yer mouth dry, and a catch in yer throat? . . . I've more words than ye can reckon, and I've a mind that ye should learn t' way of a man wi' a woman, and 'er listenin' be'ind t' crack o' t' door o' a woman's way wi' a man . . . for 'tis that ye learn out on t' fells when ye're that strong ye can step fro' one 'ill-top to another and devil a care for t' dale beneath, and you look down and see a maggoty lot o' little black things scrattin' t' earth and breakin' t' earth and thinkin' theirselves mighty fine, and a maggoty lot o' little black things that creep about wi' their eyes down to t' earth, scared and feared, feared o' t' sun and t' wind and t' rain and most feared o' theirselves and their kind, like it's you's feared on me now, ye maggoty little black thing that I look down on wi' my feet at t' height o' yer 'ead, as I looked down on ye from t' top o' t' fells and seed ye scrattin' t' earth and breakin' t' earth for t' lovely thing that ye'll never find there . . . for while ye run fro' sun and wind an' rain ye never will find it. . . . 'Tis a four-fold thing and there's no fear in it. . . . And you's afeard.

JOHN

You've talked enough and too much.

MILES

And when ye've broke t' bones i' my body what will ye do to t' woman?

JOHN

'Twill be enough for her to know what I does to you.

MILES

Ye're not so blind . . . and ye're not so far fro' bein' a man and ye're not so far fro' lovin' t' woman that ye know t' way to 'urt 'er. . . .

JOHN

It's you that 'ave come between me and 'er and et's you that I'll break in my 'ands like a carrot.

MILES

'Tis a fine lad to be broke in two by a strong man as thinks there's law on his side. . . . But for all that you're a poor fool, John Baisbrown, for ye never 'ave been together, you and 'er that's cowerin' be'ind t' door, else not me or any other thing could h' come between ye, and so 'tis you that is t' bad man and t' wicked man to take t' woman and come between 'er and t' brave things o' t' world. And 'twas a foolish thing, for 'tis what never a man can do to come between a woman and t' brave things o' t' world; you's not t' first man to try it and you's surely not t' last man to fail . . . and by many and many you's not t' first to set

yourself above a woman, and by many and many more you's not t' last man to find out t' fraud o' yerself. . . . There's more words that I 'ave for ye, but 'appen that's enough to stick i' yer gizzard.

JOHN

Come down 'ere.

MILES

And you wi' a great stick in yer 'and? I'll not.

[JOHN *throws his stick away.*

JOHN

Now will ye come?

MILES

And if I come down will ye keep yer 'ands to yerself? . . . For I've a mind to climb to Ill Bell and see t' dawn comin' up through t' mists and to stand wi' t' cold wind blawin' through and through me and blawin' all t' dirtiness o' you and t' likes o' you out o' me.

JOHN

Heh! And will ye take t' woman wi' ye to be blawn through and through and t' dirtiness blawn oot o' 'er?

MILES

I'll not. For she's that weak wi' bearin' wi' you I'd 'ave to carry 'er likely, and there's no wind fro' t' four quarters could blaw t' dirtiness o' you and t' likes o' you oot o' 'er.

JOHN

'Tis moonspun madness ye 'ave in yer 'ead, and to 'it ye would be like smashing yer fist in a babby's face. . . . Ye can go.

[MILES *runs lightly down the stairs.*

MILES

And if I go, what will ye do to the woman now that she'll not 'ear what ye've done to me?

JOHN

She'll 'ave what she's always 'ad and no more.

[MILES *suddenly strikes a match and holds it up to* JOHN'S *face until it burns his fingers, when he drops it with an oath.*

MILES

'Tis a face like a great 'am wi' little black buttons in it for eyes. 'Tis a man's face and belongs to what in this world, God save us, is called a man. . . . We'll both be dead in the wink of an eye and the world none the wiser for the two of us, and she there listenin' be'ind t' door, if she be livin', well quit o' t' two of us. [*A light appears in the woman's window.*] Whoosht!

[*The door is opened slowly and* ELLEN *appears holding a lantern high over her head. She has dressed herself hastily in bodice and skirt and has her hair loose. She stands looking down at the two men.*

MILES

She's beautiful. . . . T' dawn comin' up through t' mists.

ELLEN

Is it you, John, standing there wi' that waste o' t' world?

JOHN

Are ye come for to go out to live in t' wide cold world an' to 'ave done wi' takin' 'im to my bed?

ELLEN

I 'ave prayed for this night, John, an' every night that 'e's come to me and me turned soft in my bones and weak to let 'im come, I've prayed for you to come and set 'ands on 'im and break t' rotten life in 'im. . . . An' I've prayed for strength to tell ye so's ye might keep 'im away. . . . An' now that ye've come will ye let 'im go, and are you that's a man and strong as soft wi' 'im as me that's a woman?

MILES

Ye lie and ye lie and ye know that ye lie!

ELLEN

Take 'im for that, John, take 'im and do as ye said, and for every word that 'e's said to ye break a bone in 'is body, and for those that 'e's said to me take 'im and whip the life out o' 'im.

MILES

She's t' fit mate for you, John Baisbrown, you wi' the lies o' yer deeds, and 'er wi' the lies on 'er lips. And when I'm gone — for I'm goin' out into t' world to make a fortin' and a great name where there's rich folk and gay folk and folk that 'ave never a care in t' world — when I'm gone ye'll sit and sit and watch each other wi' strange eyes and ye'll wonder and wonder what there is of truth in each other, and never a moment will she forget and never a moment will ye be rid o' t' thing that was between ye before ever I come — t' wall o' lies; and ye'll sit and sit until ye're dead, and ye'll both be glad when it comes for t' long, long thing ye've made o' yer lives. . . . T' life I live is fit for t' likes o' me, and t' life you live is fit for t' likes o' you. . . . I've a mind to climb to Ill Bell to see t' dawn comin' up through t' mists, and fro' there I'll leap to t' world and go stridin' over it 'till I be weary, and then I'll swim out to sea until I can swim no more. . . . And God blast the souls o' the two of ye. [*The clock in the church tower strikes again.*] 'Alf past one.

[*He turns and goes off through the gate at a run.* ELLEN *takes up her lantern and goes into her room. She leaves the door open, and* JOHN *moves towards the stairs.*

CURTAIN

Act II

The scene is the kitchen of the farm, twenty years later. In the back wall is a window looking out on to the yard and across at the little house. In the left wall is a huge fireplace, over which hangs a stewpan in which is a mess of fruit. ELLEN BAISBROWN *is stirring with a great wooden spoon. On the table in the centre of the room are piles of fruit — damsons and plums. In the right wall is a press built into the wall and carved.*

It is midday.

ELLEN *has lost her looks. She is just a comely, buxom farm-woman set on the business of the moment.* JANIE, *her daughter, a girl of twenty-three and as beautiful as her mother was, is picking over the fruit, setting aside that which is fit for preserving and dropping the bruised and the rotten into a basket at her feet.*

JANIE

'Tis a grand year for fruit.

ELLEN

And a bad year for us.

JANIE

I don't know what's come to our Jan sin' feyther died. . . . 'E never was afraid o' feyther for

and that's where our Jan goes to in t' days
when we never sees him fro' dawn to dusk;
and 'e comms to me in my bed and sits and
tells o' t' wunnerful man that 'e was. . . .
'E could run an 'undred miles in a day and
there wasn't a river 'e couldn't leap, and 'e
could wrestle wi' ten men all at once, and
'e could swim like a fish under water, an' 'e
[illegible] talk wi' birds and beasts; an' 'e got
[illegible] t' fells for thev wereena' big enough
[illegible] t' world, and
[illegible] arts in t'
[illegible]
it
Wa[illegible]

There was [illegible]
was nev[illegible]
bide in 't[illegible]
and cold [illegible]
a ditch. . .
woman that[illegible]

And is it lon[illegible]

'E was schoo[illegible]
'tis true [illegible]
I never '[illegible]
'im or o' [illegible]
to look fo[illegible]

all t' fights and quarrellin' they 'ad used to 'ave, an' feyther was a strong man. [ELLEN *makes no reply.*] 'E *was* a strong man, feyther?

ELLEN

'E was a *big* man, an' a *broad* man, an' there's no knowing what 'e was and what 'e was not, same as there's never any knowin' what any critter is and is not.

JANIE

I don't know what's coom to our Jan. 'E's like he saw new things and 'eard new things and smelled new things and 'is 'ead all filled wi' strangeness. . . . Was there ever a man called Miles Dixon, moother?

[ELLEN *drops her spoon and turns for a moment to* JANIE, *then turns away again and goes on with her work.*

ELLEN

Who's been tellin' you them fairy-tales? An' what did they tell ye?

JANIE

Was there ever such a man, moother?

ELLEN

There was, but 'e's gone out into t' world long since and likely 'e's dead.

JANIE

It's Jan is full o' 'im and strange tales. . . . Old Peter Foot o' Kirkstone's been a tellin',

and that's where our Jan goes to in t' days when we never sees him fro' dawn to dusk; and 'e cooms to me in my bed and sits and tells o' t' wunnerful man that 'e was. . . . 'E could run an 'undred miles in a day and there wasn't a river 'e couldn't leap, and 'e could wrestle wi' ten men all at once, and 'e could swim like a fish under water, an' 'e could talk wi' birds and beasts; an' 'e got weary o' t' fells for they werena' big enough for 'im, and 'e went out into t' world, and when 'e went there was sick 'earts in t' women, and there was an 'undred and fifty went out into t' world to look for 'im, and it's such a man that our Jan would be. . . . Was there ever such a man?

ELLEN

There was such a man, and 'e was that bad there was never a 'ouse int' dale would let 'im bide in 't, and 'e lived out on t' fells, wet and cold under a wall and wet and cold in a ditch. . . . But I never 'eard tell of any woman that 'e 'ad.

JANIE

And is it long ago since 'e lived out on t' fells?

ELLEN

'E was schooled wi' yer feyther and me. And 'tis true that 'e went out into t' world, but I never 'eard tell o' a 'eart that was sick for 'im or o' women that went out into t' world to look for 'im.

JANIE

Jan says 'e was like a buzzard 'awk, and Jan says that 'e 'll be such a man, and 'tis for that that our Jan's out and away and leavin' you and me to do all t' work. [ELLEN *empties pan and* JANIE *brings a fresh lot of fruit for her to boil.*] There was a strange man coom last night, moother.

ELLEN

A strange man?

JANIE

I was in my little room yonder and t' light set in t' window, and there coom pebbles a' thrawed oop.

ELLEN

What like o' man?

JANIE

A weary thin man. . . . And 'e said, "Is it you?" And I said, "Yes, it's me." And 'e said, "And John Baisbrown?" . . . And I said, "John Baisbrown's dead."

ELLEN

And . . . ?

JANIE

What is it, moother?

ELLEN

And what did 'e say else?

JANIE

He stood like a gowk, an' in a soft silly voice 'e said: "T' scent o' yer 'air and t' touch o' ye 'as been wi' me ower all t' world, and there's never t' like o' you not east nor west nor north nor south."

ELLEN

What like o' man was 'e?

JANIE

Just a thin scarecrow wi' a bowed back and rags on 'im what 'ardly would 'old together. And 'e said: "For all t' brave sounds o' t' world there was ever t' sound o' yer voice ringin' in my ears."

ELLEN

An' you?

JANIE

I said, "Yer daft," and banged to t' window, and then 'e coom an' 'e talked through t' door silly like, such soft talk fro' such an owd man, till I laughed out loud at 'im and 'e went away.

ELLEN

And ye was not afeard?

JANIE

What call 'ad I to be afeard, wi' t' door locked? 'E was just a tramp like they often cooms . . . on'y not all on 'em is so daft. . . . I just laughed, for 'tis funny to 'ear such

words comin' up in an owd weary voice. . . . "You and t' scent o' yer 'air. . . ." And yet there's never a lad in t' dale could 'av said such words, 'cept only it mught be our Jan. . . . And I couldn't 'elp thinkin' 'ow feyther would a gurned at such a man, same as he gurned at our Jan for bein' aye wi' t' lasses, though there's never a lad in all t' dale that our Jan couldn't thraw in t' wink o' an eye. . . . But feyther 'e 'ad a great scorn o' women, 'im bein' such a strong man.

ELLEN

There's t' lads' dinners to be took down to croft. [JAN *comes up through the yard. He draws a live rabbit from his pocket.*] Are ye come fro' t' croft, Jan?

JAN

Me? . . . Naw. . . . That's what I been a-doin' of. . . . Caught 'im I did wi' my two 'ands an' nowt else. Comin' down Wansfell out o' t' bracken 'e runs and me after 'im; this way and that 'e turns until I took a great leap on to 'im like a buzzard 'awk. . . . And you'd 'ave me stoopin' and crampin' wi' a scythe or a rake. . . . Show me another can do that! . . . You got my broothers slavin' like cattle, an' I say 'tis not good enough for t' likes o' me.

ELLEN

Will ye take an' kill it?

JAN

Kill it? . . . I'll let it free. . . . 'Tis only to show what I can do, when my broothers be that slow they'd likely never set 'ands to a urchin. . . . Take 'un wi' ye, Janie, and set 'un free. [JANIE *takes the dinner-cans on one arm, holds the rabbit by the ears, and goes out.*] I'm *goin'*, moother.

ELLEN

Where will ye go?

JAN

I been up beck to where 'e cooms bubbling out o' t' ground, and I've been down beck to where 'e goes into t' lake and out o' t' lake and down past towns and cities to t' sea. And I be like beck, moother. I be like sprung out o' t' ground and I must go out and out growin' wider and wider, and I be grown so wide that there be no room for my body between Wansfell and Ill Bell. . . . D' ye not see 'ow big I be grown? . . . I feel that strong that if ye set me to t' ploughin' I'd 'ave t' old field turned and turned too deep wi' just t' touch o' my 'and, and if ye set me to t' reapin' I'd swing t' scythe so's all t' corn 'd be scattered to t' winds and t' point o' t' scythe 'd stick into Ill Bell and coom through and out into Yorkshire. . . . You got my broothers and my sister, and what's for them is not for me, so gi' me your blessing an' a pocketful o' money and I'll

go out into t' world an' make a fortin' and a great name . . . an' a fine lady mebbe for a wife. . . .

ELLEN

A fortin' and a great name an' a fine lady mebbe for a wife! . . . What's coom t' ye, Jan?

JAN

I've a mind to be a man, moother, and not just a ox or a ass or any poor beast that works in t' fields, and not to be t' sort o' man that my feyther was, that 'ad no eye for t' sights o' t' world and no eye for its loveliness, but only for crops and crops, and 'ad no love for t' earth but only for t' money 'e could make out o' 'er. . . . You got two sons t' like o' feyther and one that never will be.

ELLEN

[*Facing him suddenly.*] I got two sons dear to me as their feyther was, and one that's dearer to me than all t' world; two that's good sons to me and one that I love so dearly that t' greatest joy I 'ave in 'im is a pain, and I'm glad o' t' pain and the sorrow that 'e brings me, as I was glad o' t' pain and sorrow in t' beginning.

JAN

That's strange.

ELLEN

And if you go 'twill be a lonesome life for me, for there's only you that my eyes love to see.

JAN

But there's two sons that's as dear to you as my feyther was.

ELLEN

And that's nothin' at all. . . . For it's true that 'e 'ad no eyes for t' sights o' t' world and no eye for its loveliness, and 'e never 'ad no eye for t' loveliness o' me, and 'e 'ated you that I loved most dearly. . . .

JAN

That's strange . . . and 'tis true that 'e 'ated me, and true that I 'ated the sight o' 'im. . . . And those two that's like 'im 'ate me, and I 'ate them, and it 'as always been you and me against t' rest o' 'em. . . . And 'tis that 'as made me so strong. . . . There's three o' them against one o' me, and though I could take and crush t' three on 'em, there is that strength in a man that makes 'im gentle and soft. And it's t' weak men wantin' t' strength they never can 'ave that is so 'arsh and cruel, and 'tis t' strength in women like you, moother, that makes me so gentle and soft. . . .

ELLEN

And if ye'd bide . . .

JAN

If ye took beck and tried to make 'im live in a bucket ye'd not be tryin' a more foolish

thing than to make me live 'ere on t' farm like any other one in t' dale. . . . Give me your blessing, moother, and a pocketful of money, and let me go out into t' world for to see its wonders and it to see me for t' wunnerful man that I am.

[ELLEN *goes to the press, and after groping in a far corner of it produces an old Toby jug, from which she brings a stocking. She pours out the contents of it on the table.*

JAN

I'll catch a fine lady like I caught lile rabbit, an' . . . an' . . . an' I'll not let 'er go free. . . . And I'll give 'er all t' wonder o' t' world, and all t' lovely things ye can find for t' seekin' and cannot come by other ways. . . . For I'm wise, and I'm strong, and I'm swift, and I'm sure.

ELLEN

There's a fourth o' t' savings that yer feyther made.

JAN

There was a man like me in t' dale once, moother, and 'e went out into t' world, and there was never t' likes o' 'im again till me. . . .

ELLEN

And 'im dead, likely. . . . 'E never coom back. . . . I never 'eard tell o' any glory that 'e coom by.

JAN

And was 'e a man like me?

ELLEN

As much as a beech-tree is like an elder-bush. . . . But a man . . . like you.

JAN

Then 'e *was* a man?

ELLEN

'Appen. . . . Ye'll 'ave yer money in yer bag? . . . And what'll ye do when 'tis all gone?

JAN

Likes o' me don't live by money. . . . 'Tis like pretty things to play with. . . . 'E never 'ad money, did 'e?

ELLEN

Never stick nor stock.

[JAN *pours the money from one hand to the other.*

JAN

'Tis pretty. . . . Buttercups and daisies. . . . And won't tha just go rollin' and rollin'. . . . It'll be a grand man that cooms back to ye, moother, for if all t' world is full o' such blind fools as is 'ere there's nowt t' likes o' me canna do.

ELLEN

Ye'll learn. . . . Wise and strong and swift and sure ye may be, but . . . ye'll learn.

. . . T' blind fools is many, and t' man wi' eyes to see is one in thousands. It's many against one.

JAN

And if they get in my way . . . I'll set foot on 'em.

[*A pedlar comes past the window, a ragged man with pack on back. He is weary and thin. He knocks at the door, and* ELLEN *opens. The pedlar stands in the door and begins to take his pack from his back.* ELLEN *knows him at once for* MILES DIXON, *but she gives no sign. He stares intently at her, but gives no sign.* JAN *is not particularly interested, but goes on counting out his money and playing with it across the table.*

MILES

Good day to ye.

ELLEN

Good day to ye.

MILES

Can I show ye what I 'ave?

ELLEN

Come in and show me.

[MILES *comes in and lays his pack on the table.*

JAN

Sixteen pounds. . . . Are ye come from t' world?

MILES

God knows where I be not come from, young master.

JAN

An' I be just goin' out into it.

MILES

Ye'd best bide 'ere.

JAN

So moother's sayin'; but she never 'ave seed what I see an' she never 'ave knowed what I know. . . .

MILES

And what like o' place d' ye think t' world to be, young master?

JAN

Just a great wide place wi' a city 'ere and a city there and room for a man that's growed too wide to live between fell and fell. . . .

MILES

[*Fiercely.*] 'Ave ye ever 'ad th' 'unger in yer belly, young master?

JAN

N-naw.

MILES

It's that ye'll 'ave in t' world. . . . 'Ave ye ever 'ad th' 'unger i' yer soul, young master?

JAN

N-naw.

MILES

It's that ye'll 'ave in t' world, young master, an' ye'll be no more than a drop o' water in t' wide sea . . . and one man just like another. . . . And ye'll be sick for a bed to lie on, and sick for a fire to warm ye, and there'll be never a day but ye'll curse t' day ye ever set foot on t' road, and ye'll learn that ye can never turn back, and ye'll be brought to envy o' bird and beast and tree and 'ate o' men, for ye'll not find charity or kindness or any good in 'em once ye turn yer back on yer ain kin and kind . . . and so I tell ye.

JAN

Is it such a fearful place?

MILES

'Tis a place the like o' this, between fell and fell, and t' man that winna be shaped to it is broke. . . . For there's no place in this world where a man can be free, and freedom and t' great life and all t' things that come into a young man's thoughts wi' t' wind are not in t' world but in 'is 'eart. . . . What will ye buy?

ELLEN

[*Choosing.*] This and this and this.

JAN

'Ave ye a pretty thing for me to give to my moother before I go. . . . I've a great lot o' money.

MILES

Ye've a mind to go?

JAN

Aye. . . . What's been done to t' likes o' you will never be done to t' likes o' me.

MILES

Are ye that strong?

JAN

And swift . . . I can catch a rabbit wi' my 'ands.

MILES

Can ye run a 'undred miles in a day?

JAN

N-naw.

MILES

Can ye leap every stream in t' country?

JAN

N-naw.

MILES

Can ye wrastle wi' ten men all at once?

JAN

N-naw.

MILES

Can ye talk wi' birds and beasts?

JAN

N-naw.

MILES

Can ye pluck a star out o' 'eaven for to shine in a woman's 'air?

JAN

N-naw.

MILES

Nor me. . . . But there was a day when I could do every one o' these things.

JAN

An' you . . .

MILES

And off I went out into t' world greedy for t' sights and scents and sounds of it, and look at me what I am, just a ragged, broken man. . . . And I said that when I was weary I would swim out to sea until I could swim no more. When I was weary I did swim out, but back I coom to my weariness and took my pack on my back and come by a long, long road to see t' fells that wasna big enough for me and t' folk that was too small for me and too blind. . . . And what pretty thing will ye buy?

JAN

And you was a strong man and a wise man, an' a swift man, and a sure man?

MILES

I was.

JAN

And you was like a buzzard 'awk?

[ELLEN *has turned to her stewpan.*

MILES

I was.

JAN

And was you Miles Dixon?

MILES

I was.

[JAN *dives into his pocket and brings up his money.*

JAN

My feyther was a stronger man than you. [*He takes up his cap and goes, turning at the door.*] Moother, I be goin' down to croft.

[*He goes.*

ELLEN

It's a 'ard life you've 'ad of it. . . .

MILES

Aye.

ELLEN

'Tis a 'ard life I've 'ad of it.

MILES

'E was a stronger man than me. . . . Was 'e bad to ye?

ELLEN

Never. . . . And never again was your name on his lips, but there was never a day but t' thought o' you coom to 'im, and I was just a woman livin' in 'is 'ouse, and 'e 'ated t' sight o' that lad. . . . Ye come last night?

MILES

Aye.

ELLEN

I'll 'ave this and this.

[*She takes money from her purse and pays him.*

MILES

And 'im dead. . . .

ELLEN

And 'im dead, and me not lonelier than I was wi' 'im in t' 'ouse. . . . And you?

MILES

And me wi' no restin' place and a sick soul that will not let me bide; often 'unger i' my belly and always 'unger i' my soul for takin' you that never was mine. . . . And if there was never a day but t' thought o' me come between '*im* and you, there was never a day but t' thought o' you come between me and t' world. . . . And if ye'd give me to eat. [ELLEN *sets food and drink before him.*

ELLEN

It come to me that there was nothin' int' world so dear to me as that lad, and 'im you've saved for me.

MILES

T' scorn 'e 'ad of me!

ELLEN

Will ye be goin' now?

MILES

I'll live t' way I've lived these long years. [*He shoulders his pack.*] You're not t' woman that was so beautiful. . . .

ELLEN

And you're not t' man that coom to me out o' t' night, so fine and strong. . . .

MILES

We're queer cattle.

[*He goes out and through the yard.* ELLEN *returns to her work.* JANIE *comes and stands at the door.*

JANIE

Why, moother, that's t' man that stood in t' dark last night and said they silly soft things. . . .

ELLEN

See what I bought from 'im.

JANIE

Oh, t' pretty things.

[ELLEN *restores* JAN'S *money to the Toby jug in the press.*

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